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From Qatar to Xinjiang: Security in China's Belt and Road Initiative

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In 2013, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with the goals of securing China's energy sources and expanding its economic networks to the Asia-Pacific region, North and East Africa, and the Mediterranean regions by way of Russia, Central and South Asia. Many of the BRI projects involve infrastructure building in China as well as in politically unstable or economically disadvantaged countries. To ensure a successful initiative and safeguard China's investments, issues of domestic and regional security become vital.

Located in the heart of the BRI in northwest China is the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Xinjiang borders Mongolia to the east and Russia to the north, with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India to its west and south. Together with the Shanxi, Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia provinces, China's northwestern region accounts for 31.7 percent of China's overall territory, with a population of 97 million in 2018. Its population consists of more than 40 different ethnic groups, with the Turkic-speaking Uighurs and the Han Chinese being the two largest, followed by Hui Chinese Muslims, Mongolians, Khalkha, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Manchu, Tajiks, Tatars, Russians and others.¹

For centuries, Xinjiang has been China's bridge to Central Asia and the Middle East. Today China sees it as the country's energy gateway and "extension" of the Middle East.² Its proximity to energy sources predetermines its strategic importance in the BRI. However, throughout its modern history, Xinjiang has faced ethno-separatism and religious extremism, often associated with ethno-nationalism or border disputes between China and its western neighbors.³ Today, Xinjiang's diverse ethnicities and cultures continue to make this region vulnerable to political manipulation and thus a challenge for China to govern and stabilize.

Several events that took place before and after the launch of the BRI in 2013 provide a glimpse into how situations in the Middle East could have an impact on Xinjiang and China's overall domestic security. The outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011 caused worries about its ripple effects in Chinese society, particularly in the northwest region, where separatists could take advantage of political trends to promote the independence of Xinjiang.⁴ In May 2017, there were news reports about Xinjiang Uighurs joining militant groups in Syria, an indication of resort to terrorism as a form of political protest against Chinese authorities.⁵ A more recent event is the fallout between Qatar and Saudi Arabia in June 2017, or the Qatar crisis, a political standoff resulting from Saudi accusations that Qatar supported extremist groups in Syria. Qatar's alleged sponsorship of terrorism does not signify an immediate or direct threat to Xinjiang's internal stability, given the vying of traditional regional players (Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia) for domination and influence in the regional conflicts fought by militant and extremist groups in Syria, Iraq and Central Asia. However, China keeps a watchful eye on how this political incident could affect terrorist activity on its western front and adopts necessary measures to guard Xinjiang's stability as well as its BRI investments.

Several BRI projects in the Persian Gulf, including Qatar, have been ongoing for a number of years, as China continues to actively pursue bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation in Central Asia and the Middle East. While one cannot point to a direct economic collaboration between Qatar and the Xinjiang region, this paper argues that, from China's perspective, the two are interconnected through the BRI's expansive economic network and therefore by a set of common security concerns. The Qatar crisis, in China's view, reveals two points: (1) regional security in Central Asia and the Middle East is closely tied to Xinjiang's stability; and (2) a successful BRI depends on effective security collaboration between China and its partners.⁶ From these perspectives, one could understand China's view of the Qatar crisis and its corresponding security policy and strategies for the BRI. This paper aims to establish the correlation between the Qatar crisis and Xinjiang in the context of the BRI and review China's regional-security strategies designed to protect its BRI investments and ensure Xinjiang's stability.

BRI: AN OVERVIEW

China's Belt and Road Initiative came into being when Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled two of his signature development plans — the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road — during visits to Central and Southeast Asia in September and October 2013. In the course of five years, the initiative's ideology, methodology and strategy have further developed, and many collaborative projects have been either completed or are underway. An ambitious vision supported by implementation strategies and financial instruments, the BRI aims at broadening and deepening China's economic networks — and some say its political powers — in the Asia-Pacific region, Africa and the Mediterranean by way of Russia and Central and South Asia via land and sea routes.

With an investment of at least \$1 trillion — \$8 trillion, according to western think tanks' 2018 estimate⁷ — in key areas such as transportation, finance, energy and telecommunications, this initiative aims to establish six economic corridors with the participation of some 70 countries.⁸ Two are on land: the China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor and the New Eurasian Landbridge. The remaining four are maritime: the China-Indochina Corridor, the China-Bangladesh-India Corridor, the China-Pakistan Corridor and the China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor.

Joined to these BRI economic corridors are a series of diplomatic and domestic campaigns operated on the principle of *Wu Tong* (five connectivities) advocated by Xi. They could be interpreted as facilitating diplomatic communications with various countries about the BRI via international platforms; building domestic transportation infrastructures; encouraging trade and investments; building financial centers and banking systems; and establishing social services and cultural communications.⁹

With the establishment of two financial instruments, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund, by 2014 China had begun pursuing a considerable number of BRI projects. Landbridge projects included domestic high-speed railroads connecting northern, southern and western China; and foreign railway projects underway in Bangladesh; Brazil-Peru, England, Hungary-Serbia, India, Kuala-Lumpur-Singapore, Romania, Russia, Thailand, Turkey and several African countries.¹⁰ China also discussed potential maritime projects with countries and regions including Russia, Crimea, Israel and Kenya. Integrating into China's maritime strategy, a number of projects have either been implemented or planned in countries and regions across Europe, East Africa, the South China Sea and Latin America.¹¹

According to news reports, since 2017 the construction of the southern port of Gwadar in Pakistan has been underway. This would serve as an energy hub granting China a shortcut to Middle Eastern oil and gas. Other road and port infrastructure works include a railway project connecting China and Tehran and the expansion of the Khorgos Gateway, an existing cargo center linking China and Kazakhstan.¹²

The BRI has attracted a great deal of attention worldwide and generated mixed reactions among international-studies scholars and foreign-policy analysts. In the West, scholars question the feasibility and sustainability of the initiative,¹³ the absence of definitions of BRI projects, the lack of transparency in the allocation of loan investments to countries and projects,¹⁴ and the actual extent of the BRI's economic and political impact in time and geographic space.¹⁵ Others view the initiative as a way for China to play a dominating role in world politics; they see a threat to world order. Still others use the BRI to warn the United States of its potential isolation from international society and urge participation in the initiative so as to avoid being left out.¹⁶

In China, western feedback and criticism have been studied and compiled into publications such as a title published by the Social Sciences Academic Press (China): *On One Belt One Road by Worldwide Major Think Tanks*.¹⁷

China believes that the initiative aims at fulfilling three needs: "the need for a new round of reform and opening-up; the need for promoting Asian-European-African regional and non-regional cooperation and economic development; and the need for advocating world peace and development."¹⁸ It should be pointed out that the third need speaks to the success and sustainability of the initiative. What is important to economic reform in China and regional developments in Asia, Europe and Africa is political stability. The BRI's broad geographical reach means that its success depends to a great extent on the stability and security of all areas involved in the initiative.

THE QATAR CRISIS AND CHINA

Had Saudi Arabia not led several Persian Gulf states and Egypt to implement a political and economic embargo against Qatar in June 2017, that small Persian Gulf state probably would not have so quickly become a focus of China's BRI security discussions. To understand how the Qatar crisis is connected to BRI security concerns, one should first understand Qatar's role in the BRI.

Along with the other Persian Gulf States, Qatar has been considered one of the key BRI countries on the South-Asia-West-Asia connection route. With a very high GDP level of \$156 billion in 2017, and a rich supply of liquefied natural gas and crude oil,¹⁹ Qatar presents vast economic opportunities. And, importantly, it has shown an interest in supporting the BRI.²⁰

Official diplomatic relations between China and Qatar began in 1988. By Qatar's account, this diplomatic history developed in three phases: (1) from 1988, the year Emir Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani visited China, until 1999, constituting an exploratory phase during which both sides focused on cooperation on energy, petrochemicals and trade; (2) 1999-2014, when a number of bilateral agreements were signed to strengthen cooperation in economy, culture, etc.; and (3) from 2014 to the present, which overlaps with the launch of the BRI.²¹

Since the end of the Cold War, followed by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, to the beginning of the twenty-first century, China's relationships with the Persian Gulf countries, Qatar included, have continued to strengthen. Trade between China and Qatar was \$90 million in 1999, \$390 million in 2004, \$890 million in 2005, and more than \$5 billion in 2017.²² As one of the world's largest energy-consuming countries, China requires the steady, reliable energy sources the Persian Gulf can offer. China, in turn, offers arms sales and investments in the construction industry. When the BRI was launched in 2013, China predicted that Qatar would have potential infrastructure needs and financial-cooperation opportunities. According to China's assessments, prior to 2014, Qatar's highways formed the main transportation network, extending 4,840 miles (7,790 km), reaching the UAE via Saudi Arabia. There was no railway system. Qatar Airlines offered five direct flights to China: from Doha to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing and Hong Kong. There were three major seaports: Doha, Ras Laffan and Umm Said. In 2014, China's planned infrastructure investments in Qatar were \$8 billion, with projects ranging from major land and sea transportation networks to telecommunications infrastructure.²³

One of the major developmental opportunities that China and Qatar have jointly identified is Qatar's National Vision 2030. Launched in 2008, it aims to diversify Qatar's economy by developing the fields of financing, real estate, tourism and telecommunications, in addition to social, human and environmental areas.²⁴ China believes that the BRI could provide infrastructure and transportation support, which would be the foundation for Qatar's economic diversification and social advancement. In 2016, during his attendance at the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum's seventh ministerial meeting in Doha, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated, "Beijing sees the Arab Gulf emirate as a key partner in OBOR [BRI], and that deeper Sino-Qatari cooperation can brighten the prospects for Qatar's National Vision 2030."²⁵

While no intercontinental flagship BRI projects have taken place in Qatar, a number of local infrastructure projects are either ongoing or forthcoming, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. They include the East-West Corridor, a 13.6 mile (22 km) road connecting the west and south of Qatar;²⁶ and the New Doha Port Navy Wharf Project, under the auspices of the Qatar Newport Administrative Committee, south of Doha.²⁷

In balancing delicate diplomatic relations with major regional powers in the Middle East, China has for decades practiced a foreign policy that could be characterized as pragmatic and mercantilist, guided by a noninterference principle in regard to the domestic affairs of other countries.²⁸ In 2016, the year before the Saudi-led fallout with Qatar took place, China held a ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and garnered support for the BRI in the areas of "connectivity enhancement, production capacity cooperation, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges."²⁹ However, when the Qatar crisis occurred in June 2017 and Qatar was isolated by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE, with whom China has active diplomatic and trade relationships, questions arose as to how China would manage to come out of it unscathed.

There are a number of risks China faces in the Qatar crisis. Diplomatically, while Saudi Arabia and the rest of the GCC states have been generally receptive to the BRI,³⁰ their level of participation could be swayed based on how China handles this diplomatic crisis. Economically, Qatar being one of the first GCC states that endorsed the BRI and home to the first Chinese-currency RMB clearing house in the Middle East, the boycott measures adopted by Saudi Arabia could impact Qatar's economy and possibly China's.³¹ The ninth round of the China-GCC Free Trade Agreement Negotiation was concluded at the end of 2016 and the tenth was in the works before the Qatar crisis happened.³² The political situation has interrupted the planning for the tenth meeting.

Above all, one blatant risk is to regional security. Since 2013, a good number of BRI projects have been in full swing in various parts of Central Asia and the Middle East. The Qatar crisis was the result of Saudi accusations that Qatar was allegedly sponsoring militant groups in Syria and Iraq. However, political tensions between the two countries have existed for a number of years. In 2014, Qatar was accused of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, which irked Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE, due to the organization's alleged link to terrorism.³³ In recent years, Qatar is also said to have financed Sunni rebel forces in Syria considered to be extremists and terrorists.³⁴ In China's view, Qatar's alleged financial ties to these militant groups could aid the expansion of terrorism and extremism throughout already-unstable Central Asia, with the likelihood of reaching as far as Xinjiang.

XINJIANG AND BRI

Xinjiang under the BRI, as in the time of the ancient Silk Road, is perceived as a modern-day trade and transportation center connecting Central Asia and China's inland and coastal cities. The region's development is crucial to the prosperity and stability of adjacent northwestern provinces such as Gansu and Ningxia, which are economically less advanced than the eastern part of China.³⁵

According to the BRI, Xinjiang is to become the "Core Region on the Silk Road Economic Belt," due to its strategic location connecting China and Europe. Natural resources and trade and economic interactions with its western neighbors position Xinjiang as a springboard for China's westward advancement. Through the BRI, China expects to strengthen the region's infrastructure and interconnectivity networks, with a focus on the development of Khorgos (near the border of Kazakhstan), Kashgar (in western Xinjiang), Urumqi, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.³⁶ Specifically, Xinjiang has been envisioned as a regional transportation hub; a trade, logistics, and financial center; and a culture and education midpoint with expanded and effective medical services.³⁷ There are also plans to establish this region as a "gateway to three national energy resources," imported from Central Asia and the Middle East: oil and gas processing, and coal and wind power.³⁸

Three of the six BRI economic corridors pass through Xinjiang:

1) The new Eurasian Landbridge, connecting Lianyungang in southeast China and Rotterdam in the Netherlands. It consists of several domestic and international railways. One domestic railway is the Lanzhou-Urumqi High Speed Railway.³⁹ This railway began operating in 2014, connecting Xinjiang with Gansu and Qinghai provinces.⁴⁰ Internationally, since the end of 2017, China-Europe freight trains (from Urumqi to different European cities) and China-London freight trains (from the small city of Yiwu in eastern China to 15 European cities) have been in operation.⁴¹

2) The China-Central-Asia-West-Asia Corridor, starting from Xinjiang and crossing the five Central Asian countries, Iran, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, to reach Turkey. International freight trains to Russia and Turkey are planned. Freight-train routes would facilitate international trade between China, Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe and even Africa. China has already established several bilateral economic and energy-cooperation agreements with Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. An international logistics park has been under construction in the Urumqi Economic and Technological Zone, part of the "Urumqi City Logistics Development Plan 2014-2020."⁴²

3) The China-Pakistan Corridor, starting from Kashgar in Xinjiang, with Qwadar Port as the final destination. Less than two miles long, this corridor connects the Silk Road Economic Belt in the north and the Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road in the south. By 2015, many bilateral cooperation agreements and memoranda had been signed to develop transportation infrastructure and energy and industrial cooperation.⁴³

In reviewing Xinjiang's development plan, one should bear in mind two principles: (1) China views Central Asia and the Middle East as an "extension" of its northwest region and thus a part of China's "Greater Neighboring Areas;"⁴⁴ (2) this development plan, and the BRI in general, comply with Xi Jinping's foreign-policy framework: "great powers are crucial, neighboring areas are most important, developing countries are bases, and multilateral mechanisms are important arenas."⁴⁵ Thus, Xinjiang's development plan is key to China's solidifying economic powers in its western and southwestern neighborhoods and lays a foundation for Xi's foreign policy.

SECURITY AND CHINA'S STRATEGIES

As scholars and policy makers have frequently pointed out, many of the BRI partners are not politically or economically stable, and the six corridors go through regions that for years have been sites of conflict or civil wars, meddled in by international powers. Thus, the BRI faces multiple geopolitical, geo-economic, technological and financial challenges, and conflicts caused by sectarianism, global jihadism and other extremist ideologies.⁴⁶ All regions and countries where there are BRI projects share these risks.

While the BRI's goal of strengthening relationships with Central Asia and the Middle East has heightened the importance of Xinjiang, the impact of political conflicts in Central Asia and the Middle East particularly could infiltrate or pose imminent security threats to Xinjiang, and thus China at large.

Security challenges in Xinjiang are not new, given its historical relations with Chinese authorities, the diverse social fabric of the region, and its ethnic and cultural ties to its western neighbors. At present, China views security threats in Xinjiang to be the results of three forces: separatism, extremism and terrorism — by-products of continuing turmoil in Central Asia and the Middle East. The terrorist attack in Tajikistan in August 2018 hit close to home for China.⁴⁷ Stimulated by the political instability and regional conflicts resulting from the spread of extremist Islam, Uighurs' disgruntlement against Chinese authorities continues, putting China on high alert as separatist and extremist sentiments intensify in Xinjiang and adjacent areas. Following a series of unrest and terrorist attacks masterminded by Uighurs in recent years, Chinese authorities have implemented a set of comprehensive security measures in Xinjiang, making its Han population feel safer but drawing broad criticism, mostly from external human-rights groups.⁴⁸

Through the BRI, China believes that the economic prosperity of Xinjiang could be a solution to the region's security challenges and that it could be achieved in a two-prong approach: First, China should pursue the establishment of economic collaboration with neighboring countries. Second, China should invest in Xinjiang's internal infrastructure development. The logic is that an affluent Central Asia could lead to Xinjiang's more rapid development through trade and financial investments, and vice versa. Such an approach, from China's perspective, could effectively "respond to the challenges brought by the contiguous security environment."⁴⁹

Since the Qatar crisis of June 2017, the continuous standoff has become a security test to the BRI and Xinjiang development plan. The Qatar crisis, in China's view, has reconfirmed the importance of regional security in Central Asia and the Middle East in relation to Xinjiang's stability. It further shows that a successful BRI depends on security collaboration between China and its partners.⁵⁰ To reap benefits from BRI projects, it would be in Qatar's interest to join hands with China to tackle regional security threats. At the same time, to quarantine terrorist threats from Xinjiang and protect BRI in general, China sees a need to pursue security collaboration with Qatar.

The BRI has adopted a number of strategies to effect regional security and domestic stability: (1) deepening relationships with major powers and discussing neighborhood security issues; (2) visiting neighboring countries, focusing on morality, and enhancing security and mutual trust; (3) putting forward the concept of win-win cooperation and coordinating development and security of surrounding areas; and (4) flexibly utilizing various platforms and mechanisms to promote security and stability.⁵¹ While China launches BRI projects to advance economic collaboration with participating countries, as prescribed by the principle of Five Connectivities, it concurrently activates diplomatic efforts via international platforms — such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)⁵² — and other mechanisms to build bilateral and multilateral cooperation on security.

These strategies are also emphasized in the remarks of Wu Sike, China's former special envoy to the Middle East:

The main concern in the Middle East is regional security. Therefore, we are proactively helping press ahead with solutions to end regional disputes and confrontations and preparing for cooperation once peace and stability are achieved in the region. Besides, we are actively involved in dealing with the geopolitical relationships, convincing the major countries, such as the United States, Russia and European countries, that the Initiative is not a zero-sum game. It is open to all countries and regions without damaging their own interests, but rather sharing interests with partners that are exclusive to none, because in doing so we are increasing the size of the market. To make such achievements, China needs corresponding diplomatic efforts to plan for its future course. In addition to the major powers, China will enhance its relations with other countries and institutions to stimulate cultural and people-to-people exchanges, essential to fulfill the commitments of the Initiative.⁵³

Regarding the Arab countries in particular, China issued an Arab Policy Paper in 2016, which includes plans and objectives for maintaining regional security and fighting terrorism:

Regional security:

China calls for a concept of common, comprehensive cooperation and sustainable security in the Middle East, and supports Arab and regional countries in their efforts to build an inclusive and shared regional collective cooperation security mechanism, so as to realize long-term peace, prosperity and development in the Middle East....

Anti-terrorism Cooperation:

We resolutely oppose and condemn all forms of terrorism, and oppose coupling terrorism with any specific ethnic group or religion as well as double standards. We support the efforts of Arab States in countering terrorism and support their counter-terrorism capacity building. The Chinese side believes that counter-terrorism needs comprehensive measures to address both the symptoms and root causes, and counter-terrorism operations should comply with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international norms, and respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries. China is ready to strengthen anti-terrorism exchanges and cooperation with Arab countries to establish a long-term security cooperation mechanism, strengthen policy dialogue and intelligence information exchange, and carry out technical cooperation and personnel training to jointly address the threat of international and regional terrorism.⁵⁴

In dealing with security concerns exposed through the Qatar crisis, China follows Xi's foreign-policy principles and the security approaches laid out in BRI and the Arab Policy Paper. Besides maintaining a good relationship with Iran, which helps keep terrorist threats contained in Central Asia rather than infiltrating northwest China,⁵⁵ Beijing pursues comprehensive and thorough security measures through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. A case in point is the agreement signed by Qatar and China at the 86th session of the INTERPOL General Assembly in September 2017, only months after the fallout between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Its purpose is "to enhance security coordination — to fight terrorism, organized crime, cybercrime and combat extremism in all its forms."⁵⁶ This move is in line with China's BRI strategy of forming bilateral alliances through diplomatic forums to coordinate security efforts. It also appears that China plans to use Qatar's connections with militant groups as a way to curtail terrorism and thus suppress security threats in Xinjiang.⁵⁷

In a recent opinion piece, "End the Blockade of Qatar," in *The New York Times*, Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Qatar's minister of foreign affairs, asserts, "The issues confronting the nations of the Arabian Peninsula require a broader platform for dialogue and negotiation. Qatar's government believes that a new regional pact, unencumbered by the recent rift, could bring back the positive leadership and authority that once existed, and this would help our region to address the economic and political challenges we face."⁵⁸ While the piece does not provide detail on what the "regional pact" would look like, and it is not clear about China's standpoint on this approach, Al Thani's backing of "a broader platform for dialogue and negotiation" resonates with China's diplomatic strategy concerning BRI, emphasizing the importance of economic cooperation and security coordination for the sake of peaceful coexistence and shared prosperity.

In examining the BRI's development plans and security discussions pertinent to Xinjiang against the backdrop of Xi's foreign policy and China's Arab Policy Paper, it is clear that China believes that bilateral and multilateral agreements on economic advancement and security cooperation are parallel prongs to address "both the symptoms and root causes" of terrorism. As Xi pointed out in his remarks at the 19th National Congress of the National Communist Party of China in 2017, when BRI's participating countries and regions follow "a path of peaceful development and... build a community with a shared future for mankind...."⁵⁹ China believes that pan-continental trade and economic cooperation will unavoidably advance a society and civilization, resulting in improved mutual understanding and acceptance of cultures and religions, thereby diminishing terrorist and extremist impetuses.

Just as evaluating BRI's economic impact on all the involved regions would take years, the assessment of the effectiveness of China's approach to BRI's security concerns will probably require no less.

¹ Victor C. Falkenheim, "Xinjiang," in *Britannica Academic*, accessed June 19, 2018, academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Xinjiang/117345 <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Xinjiang/117345.acade...> (<https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Xinjiang/117345.academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Xinjiang/117345>). academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Xinjiang/117345. academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Xinjiang/117345.

² Bingbing Wu, "Strategy and Politics in the Gulf as Seen from China," in *China and the Persian Gulf: Implications for the United States*, eds. Bryce Wakefield and Susan L. Levenstein (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2011), 18.

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⁴ I-Wei Jennifer Chang, "Chinese Policies on the Arab Spring," in *The International Politics of the Arab Spring: Popular Unrest and Foreign Policy*, ed. Robert Mason (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 177-92.

⁵ Ben Blanchard, "Syria Says Up to 5,000 Chinese Uighurs Fighting in Militant Groups," Reuters, May 11, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-china/syria-say...> (<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-china/syria-says-up-to-5000-chinese-ughurs-fighting-in-militant-groups-idUSKBN1840UP>).

⁶ Hongzhou Zhang, "Building the Silk Road Economic Belt: Challenges in Central Asia," *Cambridge Journal of China Studies* 10, no. 3 (2015): 17, <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/255619/201503-ar...> (<https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/255619/201503-article2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>).